

Juan "Woody" Medina  
6441 Lochridge Road  
Columbia MD 21044

Good evening members of the County Council and fellow residents of Howard County. My name is Juan Medina (my nickname is Woody), and I live at 6441 Lochridge Road in Columbia. I am a Master Beekeeper. I have 3 colonies in my backyard. I am testifying today in support of CB55-2010.

You have heard (or will hear) a lot of testimony informing you of the many benefits of honey bees and the need to protect them. Given all the benefits that honey bees provide, you would think passing this bill would be an easy task. Indeed, it should be. Unfortunately, we have had a couple bumps in the road. As you know, the planning board voted unanimously against this measure. Their findings were based on errors and contradictions. I can elaborate further on these upon request. But please let me be clear - I am not here to berate the planning board. They are hard-working civil servants and they are trying to do the best they can. Unfortunately, in the case of our specific amendment, I think their conclusions were misguided and they were confusing honey bees with yellow jackets.

It's common – a lot of people make the same mistake. Because of the decline of honey bees over the past 30 years, we have lost touch of the distinction. As the honey bee population has dropped, yellow jackets have become more prominent.

Honey bees are vegetarians. They collect nectar and pollen (which they get from flowers), water and a sticky stuff called propolis (which they get from trees).

Honey bees will sting, but they will only do so in self-defense and they will die in the process.

Yellow jackets, on the other hand, are carnivores. They eat meat. They sting their prey and bring it back to their nest to feed on. Their survival relies on their ability to sting. They are good at it. Yellow jackets are more protective of their nest and will buzz you for coming nearby, whereas the honey bees will generally leave you alone unless you are physically disturbing their home. What's worse – yellow jackets tend to build their nest in places that put them in closer proximity to humans, like under a deck.

As you can see, their behavior is different, but because of the similarities in their appearance, they get grouped together. Honey bees get a bad rap in the process. It's like having an evil twin brother – you're constantly accused of things that your brother has done. I think the planning board fell into this confusion and as a result, their final recommendations were misguided.

In making your decision, I hope you consider the importance of honey bees and recognize the difference in behavior of honey bees and yellow jackets. They are not the same. Don't be fooled.